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# JD Vance defends baseless rumor about Haitian immigrants eating pets

By [Kit Maher](#) and [Chris Boyette](#), CNN  
⌚ 4 minute read · Updated 1:57 PM EDT, Sun September 15, 2024



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**(CNN)** — Republican vice presidential candidate JD Vance on Sunday reiterated false claims about Haitian immigrants eating the pets of residents in Springfield, Ohio.

Asked to support his claims in an interview with CNN's Dana Bash on "State of the Union," Vance pointed to what he said are firsthand accounts from constituents who have told him this is happening, though he didn't provide the evidence.

"The American media totally ignored this stuff until Donald Trump and I started talking

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“The American media totally ignored this stuff until Donald Trump and I started talking about cat memes. If I have to create stories so that the American media actually pays attention to the suffering of the American people, then that’s what I’m going to do,” the Ohio senator said.

Bash replied, “You just said that this is a story that you created.”



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Vance said, “It comes from firsthand accounts from my constituents. I say that we’re creating a story, meaning we’re creating the American media focusing on it. I didn’t create 20,000 illegal migrants coming into Springfield thanks to Kamala Harris’ policies. Her policies did that. But yes, we created the actual focus that allowed the American media to talk about this story and the suffering caused by Kamala Harris’ policies.”



The city of Springfield notes on its website that approximately 12,000 to 15,000 immigrants live in Clark County, and that Haitian immigrants are there legally as part of a parole program that allows citizens and lawful residents to apply to have their family members from Haiti come to the United States.

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine, a Republican, flatly denied the rumor on Sunday and praised the immigrants for their positive influence on the community.

“No. Absolutely not,” DeWine said on ABC’s “This Week” when asked whether he’d seen any evidence of immigrants eating pets.

“Let me tell you what we do know, though. What we know is that the Haitians who are in Springfield are legal,” the governor said. “They came to Springfield to work.”

On Tuesday, Vance said it was possible the claim about Haitian immigrants might not be true, but he encouraged his followers to continue posting “cat memes.”

Springfield Mayor Rob Rue said Sunday that the city is going through “a very difficult time,” adding that it would be helpful if politicians who amplified plainly untrue rumors “understood the weight of their words.” He said city officials, including city commissioners, have received threats for the past three consecutive days.

“We have been shined under a spotlight that is so bright that it’s hard to see some of the things that we actually need to be focusing on, and that’s been difficult for sure,” the mayor



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“We have been shined under a spotlight that is so bright that it’s hard to see some of the things that we actually need to be focusing on, and that’s been difficult for sure,” the mayor told Bash on “State of the Union,” adding that “we’re concerned about the security in our community, and we’re focused on that right now.”

The city hall in Springfield was forced to close due to a bomb threat on Thursday. Two elementary schools were evacuated Friday “based on information received from the Springfield Police Division,” the Springfield City School District announced. Two local hospitals were also forced into lockdown due to bomb threats Saturday, according to statements sent to CNN.

Vance rejected the idea that his rhetoric has led to bomb threats.



“There is nothing that I have said that has led to threats against these hospitals, these hospitals, the bomb threats and so forth,” Vance said.

“The Springfield mayor, he’s dealing with a lot of terrible things. I certainly sympathize with the guy, and we’re going to try to help him out. But he did not accuse me of inciting a bomb threat. He just didn’t,” Vance said later in the interview.

“All that I’ve done is surface the complaints of my constituents, people who are suffering because of Kamala Harris’ policies. Are we not allowed to talk about these problems because some psychopaths are threatening violence?” he added.

Rue said he has not heard from Vance directly, “and that’s fine,” but said the senator and others propagating the rumors should know authorities in Springfield are telling the truth.

DeWine acknowledged that Springfield was having some issues adjusting to the influx of mostly Haitian immigrants through the federal immigration program, but he said officials were working on them.

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"When you go from a population of 58,000 and add 15,000 people onto that, you're going to have some challenges and some problems," the Ohio governor said in his ABC interview. "And we're addressing those. We're working on those every single day."

Vance said that he is hearing directly from constituents about these concerns, bringing up one specifically about geese.

"My constituents have brought approximately a dozen separate concerns to me. Ten of them are verifiable and confirmable, and a couple of them I talk about because my constituents are telling me firsthand that they're seeing these things. So I have two options, Dana, I can ignore them, which is what the American media has done for years to this community, or I can actually talk about what people are telling me," Vance said.

"My attitude is, listen to my constituents. Sometimes they're going to say things that people don't like, but they're saying things that people don't like because their town has been overwhelmed, and it's my job to try to fight for them and to protect them," Vance said.

*This story has been updated with additional developments.*

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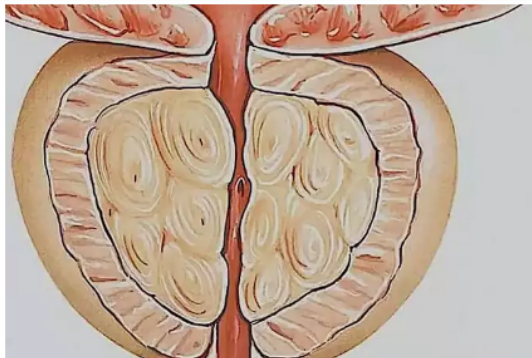
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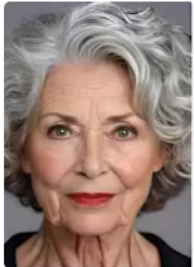
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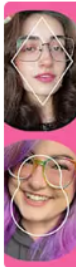
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